

Dear Physical Therapy Alumni:

These are challenging economic times for many in our country and the University has, and will continue to be impacted by reductions in state funding, severe limitations on hiring, as well as restrictions on funding for travel by faculty. The cold, gray days of winter seemed a bit longer and drearier this year. Spring however, has finally arrived in New England. Warmth and sunshine do have a way of lifting the spirits and the excitement of graduation was a powerful reminder about all that is good about Physical Therapy at UConn. This week we welcomed the class of 2012 and shared the excitement as they began their journey to the DPT degree.

Thus while trying at times we have much to be proud of and thankful for. First let's celebrate the graduation of 27 physical therapy students who received their degrees at the graduate commencement on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations are in order for each. These graduates will continue the legacy of UConn graduates meeting the needs of patients through expert and compassionate care.

There is more good news. I am also pleased to report another large increase in the number of applications and acceptances of offers of admission this year. The steady growth of the Doctor of Physical Therapy program is essential to the future strength of the program. I am also pleased to report on the support offered enrolled students. Despite the economic downturn we were able to award 14 DPT students scholarships at the Neag School of Education award ceremony held on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Congratulations to each of the scholarship winners and my special thanks to all who have donated to make these awards possible. Today's physical therapy students face the twin challenges of a longer road to completion of their professional preparation and rising costs of education. There has never been a greater need for scholarship support of physical therapy education.

While on the subject of awards, please join me in congratulating David Tiberio PT, PhD and Professor Emeritus who received special recognition from the Neag School of Education Alumni Association. I encourage our alumni to join with the Neag School of Education Alumni Society in supporting Physical Therapy and our students.

There is also good news to report regarding the Nayden Rehabilitation Clinic. The relocation project was completed the doors of the new clinic opened on April 20<sup>th</sup>. A special thanks to Clinic Director, Mr. Morgan Hills III, PT, and the entire staff for their hard work and patience in this process. Stop in and visit them if you get to campus. The new clinic allows us to provide excellent care to more patients, enhance clinical education for the students as well as integrate the activities of the Clinic with the research mission of the Department.

"Department" brings me to the last but perhaps biggest bit of news. On January 16<sup>th</sup> 2009 the Board of Trustees approved the merger of the Department of Physical Therapy and the

Department of Kinesiology into a new Department of Kinesiology. The proposal for the merger was fully supported by the faculty in both departments and at all administrative levels. There are multiple reasons for merging the departments, especially in these challenging economic times. Neither department alone was large enough to garner adequate administrative support. With nearly year-around coursework and research agendas it is not possible to operate a department with one administrative assistant. Well-earned vacation time and illnesses resulted in a loss of support for faculty and an avalanche of work upon return for the administrative assistant in both departments. The merger also allows for better distribution of committee work across faculty and greater overall efficiency.

Most importantly this merger will foster greater research collaboration especially efforts to translate laboratory findings into interventions that improve patient care and promote healthy lifestyles. The merger will not directly affect the physical therapy curriculum however I strongly believe that research informs teaching. A larger and stronger research team will bring more cutting edge knowledge into the classroom in all of the programs housed in the department.

Some changes in operations will become apparent in the coming months. First, administrative operations will be centralized in Gampel Pavilion where some physical therapy courses will be taught. Moreover, the DPT students will have greater access to the laboratory facilities in Gampel Pavilion which far exceed the capabilities of those available in Koons Hall. My role will shift to one of Physical Therapy Program Director and associate department head to Dr. Carl Maresh who will serve as the department head of the new entity. I am truly excited about this new venture. While it will take some time to work out the bugs inherent in organizational change this will be a small price for future filled with the excitement of discovery and learning made possible by the work of a larger faculty dedicated to movement and the treatment of movement disorders.

I wish all of the alumni a healthy, happy summer season. Visit and see all of the changes if you are in the area. If you don't get to campus I will keep you informed through my fall newsletter later this year.

Best regards,

Craig